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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

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EXDIS

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SUBJECT: ANNUAL US POLICY ASSESSMENT FOR SOVIET UNION

REF: 75 STATE 289641

1. PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IS ATTACHED TO THE POLICY ASSESSMENT THIS YEAR SINCE MOMENTUM OF US-SOVIET IMPROVING RELATIONS HAS SLOWED CONSIDERABLY AND THE COMING YEAR PROMISES TO BE ONE OF FURTHER RETARDATION AND UNCERTAINTIES. AS OUTLINED IN REFERENCE, WE PLAN TO ORGANIZE INTER-AGENCY MEETING TO DISCUSS EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT AND ON THAT BASIS TO FOLLOW UP WITH A COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT OF POLICY. FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS ARE PROVIDED BY INTERESTED OFFICES FOR EMBASSY'S CONSIDERATION IN DRAWING UP ITS ASSESSMENT AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT CONSIDERED OPINION HERE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.-

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2. US POLICY OBJECTIVES. MANY OF THE OBJECTIVES LISTED

LAST YEAR REMAIN VALID IN 1976, BUT NEW QUESTIONS HAVE EMERGED WHICH NEED ATTENTION:

--A. WHAT PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO US-USSR RELATIONS IN THIS ELECTION YEAR? IS BENIGN NEGLECT A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE EVEN FOR A BRIEF PERIOD WITHOUT DESTROYING THE PRO-

GRESS WE HAVE MADE IN THE RECENT PAST? CAN SUCH PRIORITY ITEMS AS SALT BE PUSHED EVEN WHILE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP LANGUISH? CAN WE AVOID A DOWNWARD SPIRAL, OR A STRONG BACKSWING OF THE PENDULUM IN OUR RELATIONS? IF WE CAN'T, WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES?

--B. HOW DO WE BEST COPE WITH GROWING SOVIET POWER AND APPARENT INCLINATION TO USE IT ASSERTIVELY? IS THERE IN FACT A NEW ASSERTIVE TREND WHICH HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE USSR'S ACHIEVEMENT OF SUPERPOWER STATUS OR IS THE ANGOLA SCENARIO A UNIQUE ONE RELATED PERHAPS TO THE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE SUCCESSES AND ORTHODOXY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PARTY CONGRESS? WHAT LEVERAGE DO WE DISPOSE OF, AND HOW SHOULD IT BE MANAGED? IS THE "NEW CONTAINMENT" A VIABLE CONCEPT, AND SHOULD IT BE ELEVATED TO A POLICY OBJECTIVE AT THIS STAGE?

--C. DOES ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PATTERNS OF LONG-TERM BILATERAL COOPERATION REMAIN A VALID POLICY GOAL WHICH SHOULD BE PURSUED ACTIVELY THIS YEAR? OR SHOULD THIS ASPECT OF OUR POLICY BE ALLOWED TO FADE FROM VIEW FOR A TIME IN RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC CRITICISM AND SOVIET ACTIONS? WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT IN VIEW OF THE LONG-TERM NATURE OF MOST JOINT ECONOMIC VENTURES, IT WOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO BUILD UP MOMENTUM AGAIN IN THIS AREA OF OUR RELATIONS ONCE IT HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO LAPSE.

3. PROGRESS TOWARD OBJECTIVES. EVEN IF WE DECIDE TO PURSUE MORE MODEST OBJECTIVES IN 1976, SOME BACKSLIDING IN VARIOUS AREAS IS INEVITABLE. SEVERAL NASTY BILATERAL ISSUES THREATEN TO OCCUPY CENTER STAGE AND TROUBLESOME MULTILATERAL ISSUES ALSO LOOM. IF THERE IS NO SALT AGREEMENT THIS YEAR, A DOWNWARD SPIRAL IN OUR RELATIONS

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IS VIRTUALLY INEVITABLE, AND THE PARTY CONGRESS SEEMS TO OFFER SOME EVIDENCE THAT EVEN THE MORE RESTRICTED DETENTE LINE ENUNCIATED AT THE PARTY CONGRESS HAS ITS CRITICS. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS TREND, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US POLICY?

--A. SALT. WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE FOR THE OVERALL NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP? DO THE SOVIETS NEED

AN AGREEMENT MORE THAN WE DO IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR TROUBLED ECONOMY AND "NEW" INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXTENT OF THE DEFENSE BURDEN (IN RUBLES)?

--B. HEAVY EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON TRADE WITH THE WEST AT THE CONGRESS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THE ADVERSE SOVIET HARD CURRENCY BALANCE AND THE GRAIN PROBLEM POINT IN THE DIRECTION OF CONTINUED SOVIET VULNERABILITIES. OUR OWN

OPTIONS ARE CIRCUMSCRIBED BY EXISTING TRADE LEGISLATION, WHICH WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT BE REVISED THIS YEAR, AND BY PRESSURES AND COUNTERPRESSURES ON GRAIN SALES. A SOURING OF THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE WILL CERTAINLY RESULT IN US BUSINESS TAKING A MORE RESERVED ATTITUDE TO TRADE WITH THE USSR. WHAT IS THE PROPER POLICY FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO PURSUE IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES? -

--C. CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS ARE DEVELOPING WELL, BUT US BUDGET SITUATION CAUSES PROBLEMS FOR THEIR EXPANSION AT A TIME WHEN THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN MORE RECEPTIVE THAN BEFORE. WHAT SHOULD WE BE AIMING FOR IN THE YEAR AHEAD?

--D. BILATERAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS REMAIN UNDER ATTACK IN THE US, AND OUR DECISIONS TO POSTPONE OR DROP HIGH-VISIBILITY MEETINGS IN THE LIGHT OF ANGOLA CAN RESULT IN THE US LEAD AGENCIES LOSING INTEREST IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENTS. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO KEEP SOME MOMENTUM IN THESE EXCHANGES, AND DO WE NEED TO PURSUE NEW DIRECTIONS IN ANY FIELDS?

--E. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AND CSCE. SO FAR WE HAVE AVOIDED POLEMICS IN OUR EFFORTS TO USE THE CSCE FINAL
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ACT CONSTRUCTIVELY TO WIN A MORE FORTHCOMING SOVIET RESPONSE ON BASKET III ISSUES, BUT SOVIET DEFENSIVENESS AND READINESS TO COUNTERATTACK IS INCREASINGLY APPARENT. HOW SHOULD WE PURSUE THESE MATTERS AND WHAT OTHER TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PURSUIT OF OUR HUMANITARIAN INTERESTS WITH THE SOVIETS? IN VIEW OF THE DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES US POLICY IS HAVING, DO WE PUT TOO LITTLE EMPHASIS (AT LEAST RHETORICALLY) ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES?

--F. BILATERAL "HOUSEKEEPING" ISSUES, SUCH AS CHANCERY CONSTRUCTION AND PROTECTION OF SOVIET DIPLOMATS THREATEN TO BE INCREASINGLY TROUBLESOME IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS?

4. FUTURE TRENDS AND PROBLEMS.

--A. WE WILL BE FACED WITH LEADERSHIP CHANGES, POSSIBLY IN BOTH COUNTRIES. ANALYSTS' VIEWS IN WASHINGTON ARE BY NO MEANS UNANIMOUS, BUT SOME REGARD THE NEW LEADERSHIP BALANCE STRUCK AT THE PARTY CONGRESS AS INHERENTLY UNSTABLE AND SEE THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER IMPORTANT CHANGES AT THE SPRING OR SEPTEMBER PLENUMS. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO COMPREHENSIVE

PREPARATIONS AS YET FOR A SUCCESSION, WHICH COULD COME BEFORE 1977. WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUITY OF POLICY WITH A LEADERSHIP CHANGE IN MOSCOW?

--B. REGULATING THE STRATEGIC BALANCE. IF WE DO GET A SALT II AGREEMENT, WHAT ARE PROSPECTS FOR PROCEEDING FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD TOWARD STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTIONS, PROHIBITION OF DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS. AS REGARDS THE MILITARY BALANCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE, THE SOVIETS SEEM IN NO HASTE TO TAKE REAL STEPS TOWARD "BOLSTERING POLITICAL DETENTE WITH MILITARY DETENTE." SHOULD WE PURSUE THE MBFR TALKS SERIOUSLY THIS YEAR, PURSUE THEM IN A ROUTINE FASHION IN 1976, OR TRY TO PROD THEM WITH AN INDEFINITE RECESS IN THE TALKS? ARE THERE ANY PROSPECTS FOR RESTRAINTS ON CONVENTIONAL FORCES, FOR EXAMPLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST OR THE INDIAN OCEAN?

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--C. SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF THE US WILL BE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. HOW HAVE THEY CHANGED IN THE PAST MONTHS?

--D. ANGOLA, TO JUDGE BY THE 25TH PARTY CONGRESS PRO- NOUNCEMENTS, MAY NOT BE AN ISOLATED DEVELOPMENT. WHERE AND WHAT ARE THE NEW TROUBLE SPOTS FORESEEABLE IN THE COMING PERIOD CAN WE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS IN GENERAL? AND SPECIFIC CASES, AND SHOULD WE?

--E. THE TOUGH QUESTION OF COMMUNISM IN WESTERN EUROPE, PRESENTS BOTH THE US AND THE USSR WITH DILEMMAS. LEAVING ASIDE THE QUESTION OF US POLICY ON THE PARTICIPATION IN POWER OF WESTERN COMMUNIST PARTIES, WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR INCREASED STRENGTH AND INTERDEPENDENCE FOR SOVIET FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICIES? IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO EXPLOIT THE CONTRADICTIONS INHERENT IN THE SITUATION TO OUR BENEFIT. IF SO, AT WHAT COST TO OURSELVES? KISSINGER

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